Sociology 262: Making Race & Ethnicity in the United States
Spring 2016
M/W/F 11-11:50 a.m.
AJLC 201

Wesley Hiers
King 320A, x58593
wesley.hiers@oberlin.edu
office hours: Mon & Wed 4:30-5:30, and by appointment
preferred contact method: e-mail

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What does it mean to speak of the “making” of race and ethnicity? What is the difference, if any, between “race” and “ethnicity”? What social processes have led to the currently prevailing ways of classifying people (oneself and others) by ethnicity and race in the United States, as well as to the patterns of inequality that correlate with those classifications? How are ethnic and racial boundaries changing, and with what consequences for the future? And what do scholars mean when they speak of “boundaries” and “boundary changes” and “boundary consequences”? What does all of this have to do with identity, with interests, with who gets what? In pursuit of questions such as these, this course examines the social construction of race and ethnicity in the United States as a historical and ongoing process. Major historical developments such as territorial settlement, slavery, Jim Crow and civil rights receive due attention, along with more contemporary patterns of boundary-making, power, and inequality across a range of social domains.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course aims to help you:

to comprehend “race” and “ethnicity” as analytical rather than folk concepts, and to arrive at your own understanding, even if only provisional, of their proper conceptualization;

to speak and write in an informed manner: about variation over time in the ethnic/racial composition of the United States, about some major social processes that shaped this varying composition; and about the conceptually awkward character of this use of “composition” in a course devoted to understanding the “making” and “social construction” of race and ethnicity;

to develop an understanding of major conceptualizations of racism, as well as major types of assimilation theory, including how these are related to boundary concepts (ethnic/racial boundaries, boundary change, boundary consequences), and how these have been used to understand the making of race-ethnicity over time;
to develop a critical understanding of divergent perspectives on the future trajectory of
ethnic/racial boundaries and consequences in the United States;

to gain facility with the interpretation and analysis of quantitative data on ethnic/racial inequality

ASSESSMENTS

25% for 10 weekly synopsis/reflection memos:

--due at start of class on Friday of weeks 2-6 and 9-13
--graded pass/fail
--about 500 words; typed; 1.5 or double spacing; two-sided is okay
--address readings and other course materials from M, W, F

65% for two take-home essay exams:

--mid-term (30%): distributed on Wednesday of week 7; due by Friday of week 7 at
11:59 p.m. via Blackboard
--final (35%): distributed by Tuesday, May 10 at 9 p.m.; due by Thursday, May 12 at 9
p.m.

10% for attendance and in-class work

--be present and prepared with course materials at the scheduled start time

POLICIES, etc.
1. Please let me know, by the end of the second week of class, about any religious holidays that
will affect your participation in the course.

2. Honor Code: This course will follow the policies described in the Oberlin College Honor Code
and Honor System. Please include the statement “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code
in this assignment” in all written work. Please contact me if you have any questions about the
relationship of the Honor Code to any of your work in the course. For more information:
https://new.oberlin.edu/arts-and-sciences/academic-resources-and-support/honor-code.dot

3. computers in the classroom: I allow and encourage the use of computers during our class
meetings for in-class, Soc 262 work. No other use is permitted.

4. disabilities: The College makes reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities.
Students should notify the Office of Disability Services in Peters G-27/G-28 and their instructor
of any disability related needs. For more information, see http://new.oberlin.edu/office/disability-
If you are eligible for and needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a disability, please let me know by the end of the second week.

5. If I change the syllabus, I will notify you in class or via e-mail, and post an updated version on Blackboard.

6. office hours: The regular times are stated at the beginning of the syllabus. If this time frame does not work for you, I would be happy to schedule an alternative meeting time. In general, I can make appointments on Monday and Wednesday evenings until 9 p.m., or on Fridays between 4:30 and 5:30 p.m. If these time frames do not work for you, I might also be able to meet on Sunday evening. Please do your best to make your request 24 hours in advance for any alternative meeting time on Monday, Wednesday, or Friday. If you would like to meet on a Sunday evening, then please make your request by Friday at 9 p.m. No notice is of course required for visits to my office during regularly scheduled office hours.

7. contacting me: Please use e-mail. If your query is rather involved, I will ask you to see me in person. I will respond to e-mails sent between Sundays at noon and Fridays at noon within twenty fours. It might take me longer to respond to e-mails sent outside this time frame.

8. communicating with me via e-mail: Few would mistake me for a member of the formality police, but I do appreciate when e-mails contain a salutation. More importantly, strive for maximum clarity when composing your e-mail. Please format the subject line in this way: Soc 262: [reason for e-mail]. Thanks in advance.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS & READINGS
Unless an internet link is provided in this syllabus, all readings are available via the course Blackboard site.

Week 1 (Feb. 1-5): introduction; concepts

1.1 Monday
syllabus & introduction

1.2 Wednesday

1.3 Friday
Stephen Cornell & Douglas Hartmann, “Mapping the Terrain: Definitions,” pp.15-38 in *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World* (1998) **focus on 18-34 & Figure 2.1 on page 35**


**Week 2 (Feb. 8-12): concepts; overview of indigenous/white boundary**

2.1 Monday


2.2 Wednesday


2.3 Friday


**Week 3 (Feb. 15-19): Territory & making of indigenous/white boundary**

3.1 Monday

3.2 Wednesday

3.3 Friday


F. James Davis, “The one-drop rule defined,” pp.4-6 in *Who is Black? One Nation’s Definition* (2001)

**Week 4 (Feb. 22-26): Labor, social space, & making of black/white boundary**

4.1 Monday


4.2 Wednesday
Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” pages 1745-1750


Kennedy, “History: Unequal Protection,” pages 36-58

4.3 Friday
Kennedy, “History: Unequal Protection,” pages 59-75


*read 28-31 to gain understanding of “dissimilarity” measure
*use text on 32-43 as needed to interpret tables & figures on these pages

Week 5 (Feb. 29-March 4): Social space & making of black/white boundary

5.1 Monday
Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” pages 1750-1757

http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/
*read sections I, II, and V-VII

5.2 Wednesday


5.3 Friday
Week 6 (March 7-11): Territory, labor, & making of Mexican/Anglo boundary

6.1 Monday


6.2 Wednesday


6.3 Friday


Week 7 (March 14-18): Pan-ethnicity & the making of Hispanics/Latinos
7.1 Monday


7.2 Wednesday
Jiménez, “Mexican Americans: A History of Replenishment and Assimilation” pages 48-52


7.3 Friday
no class; take-home exam due via Blackboard by 11:59 p.m.

**Week 8 (March 21-25)**
no class; mid-semester break

**Week 9 (March 28-April 1) The question of intra-white ethnic boundaries in pre-WWII era**

9.1 Monday
no assigned reading; mid-course discussion

9.2 Wednesday

9.3 Friday

**Week 10 (April 4-8) The question of intra-white ethnic boundaries in pre-WWII era**

10.1 Monday
10.2 Wednesday
pages 327-342

10.3 Friday
Fox & Guglielmo, “Defining America’s Racial Boundaries”  
pages 342-369

Week 11 (April 11-15): Exclusion and the making of Asian Americans

11.1 Monday


pages 112-126


11.2 Wednesday


11.3 Friday


Week 12 (April 18-22): Changing stereotypes and the making of Asian Americans; Whither race-ethnicity?

12.1 Monday


12.2 Wednesday


12.3 Friday

David Hollinger, “The One Drop Rule & the One Hate Rule,” pp.18-28 in Daedalus winter issue (2005)

Week 13 (April 25-29): Whither race-ethnicity making in the U.S.?

13.1 Monday
13.2 Wednesday

13.3 Friday

Week 14 (May 2-6) Whither race-ethnicity making in the U.S.?

14.1-14.3
(1) additional data & conceptualization on questions raised in weeks 12 &13